

Prosodic evidence for the lexical status of quasi-serial verbs

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Qualifying Paper 1

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September 14, 2009

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0. Introduction

In English, *quasi-serial verb* refers to a type of verb-verb construction where the first verb, V_1 , is usually *come* or *go*:

- (1) a. *Go fetch* me the newspaper.
- b. I'll *come talk* to him later.

Commonly known as the *go get* construction, quasi-serial verbs consist of two verbs. While the first verb is most frequently *go* or *come*, as shown in (1), Pullum (1990) also cites *run* and *hurry* as rare but possible first verbs in certain dialects. The examples in (2) were pulled from a Google search.

- (2) a. *Run fetch* a pitcher, get the baby some beer.
- b. *Hurry give* me, a cheap mofo like myself, an idea.

Excepting those that begin with *run* and *hurry*, which I will not discuss in this paper, quasi-serial verbs are fairly common in most English dialects, as exemplified in their common occurrences in popular song lyrics (3; from Pullum 1990).

- (3) a. *Come fly* with me.
- b. *Come see* about me.
- c. *Go tell* it on the mountain.

Quasi-serial verbs, furthermore, are by far not a recent innovation in English. The first recorded instance of a *go*-headed quasi-serial verb, as noted by the Oxford English Dictionary, dates back to Middle English in a quote by John Barbour from 1386:

- (4) *Ga purches* land quhar euir he may.

The examples in (5) show quasi-serial verbs used in a range of English poetry.

- (5) a. I must *go seek* some dew-drops here. (Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)
- b. What is his own?—*Go look* at each transaction. (Byron, *Don Juan*)
- c. *Come let* us lift our joyful eyes. (Watts, Book II, Hymn 108)
- d. Salmon, *come twist* your tail around! (Lewis Carroll, "The Mock Turtle Soup")

As illustrated by the examples above, quasi-serial verbs have persisted since Middle English through modern day.

Despite its long history in English, both the grammatical nature and the historical development of quasi-serial verbs are not fully understood. While they resemble serial verb constructions in other languages, Baker (1989) has argued, amongst others, that quasi-serial verbs are not the same as serial verbs; hence, the terminology “quasi-”. Alternatively, others have discussed whether quasi-serial verbs behave distinctively from other similar English constructions, such as the *go and get* conjoined verb construction, with which quasi-serial verbs—*go get*—have traditionally been grouped (e.g., Pullum 1990). Diachronically, opposing hypotheses exist on the origins and development of quasi-serial verbs: linguists still debate whether they pattern as contractions of similar English constructions or whether they arise via independent avenues (e.g., Zwicky 2003). Additionally, the historical development of quasi-serial verbs potentially offers evidence for deciding the lexical status of quasi-serial verbs, making this diachronic discussion a particularly relevant one.

This paper proposes a third hypothesis on the lexical status of quasi-serial verbs—that these constructions are actually a type of verb-verb compound. A range of phonological, syntactic, and morphological evidence suggests that quasi-serial verbs act as a single morphological unit like compounds. In addition to the syntactic, semantic, and morphological behavior of quasi-serial verbs, further evidence from the metrical analysis of poetic texts provided in this paper demonstrates that quasi-serial verbs pattern distributionally like compounds. The metrical data demonstrates a tight prosodic constituency between the two verbs of the quasi-serial verb construction, suggesting that quasi-serial verbs are not and do not arise from a contraction of the conjoined verb construction, as most commonly posited. The data also shows that quasi-serial verbs significantly differ from other similar constructions in their metrical behavior, thereby offering further support that they should not be categorized with these constructions both synchronically and diachronically. Using data from a cross-section of English poetry primarily of the English iambic tradition and ranging from the 1500s to the mid-20th century illustrates the robustness of the prosodic behavior of quasi-serial verbs throughout the history of the English language.

The paper is organized as follows: §1 presents a number of syntactic, phonological, and morphological arguments, suggesting that quasi-serial verbs are a type of verb-verb compound. Section 2 summarizes previous research on English quasi-serial verbs, mainly focusing on the distinction between quasi-serial verbs and other similar constructions such as serial or conjoined verbs. Section 3 motivates the use of metrical texts as a window into the prosodic behavior of quasi-serial verbs. Then, §4 presents the data and results of the current quantitative study, which includes both an overview on the metrical patterning of quasi-serial verbs in English verse and an in-depth analysis of Shakespeare's treatment of quasi-serial verbs as compared to other constructions like noun compounds. In §5, I consider how the English metrical data relates to the competing hypotheses of the historical development of quasi-serial verbs. Given the metrical data presented, I argue that quasi-serial verbs are neither relatives nor descendents of conjoined verbs despite common belief; instead, quasi-serial verbs pattern and behave phonologically, morphologically, and semantically as compounds. The results of this paper should furthermore demonstrate the potential of metrical texts and quantitative metrical analysis in testing linguistic hypotheses.

1. Quasi-serial verbs as verb-verb compounds

The previous work on quasi-serial verbs has largely focused on discovering what quasi-serial verbs are not. Baker (1989) argues that quasi-serial verbs do not behave like true serial verbs because they do not exhibit critical argument-sharing properties that non-English serial verbs have. Quasi-serial verbs, based on analysis by Pullum (1990), Pullum and Zwicky (1999), and other studies before them, also are not like *go and get* constructions, even if they are often compared to such. Historical arguments by Zwicky (2003) and made here in §5 further corroborate the analysis that quasi-serial verbs are not related to *go and get* constructions. Instead, quasi-serial verbs function morphologically more like a single word unit; we have, for example, the term *go-getter* in English but not *go-and-getter*. Thus, evidence both presented here and in previous work suggests that quasi-serial verbs act as a single morphological unit: a verb-verb compound. Though the properties that distinguish compounds are far from cut and

dry (Lieber and Štekauer 2009), quasi-serial verbs share many of the same properties of compounds—even noun-noun compounds in English.

Quasi-serial verbs have a strict inflection condition. Pullum (1990), along with previous researchers, points out the difference between quasi-serial verbs and *go-and-get* constructions in respect to inflection. A unique feature of quasi-serial verbs is that both verbs of the construction must remain in their bare forms—(6a) and (6b) below are ungrammatical. Conversely, the *go and get* construction does not have such a strict inflectional constraint, as seen from (6c) and (6d), where non-bare forms of V_1 and V_2 are allowed and grammatical¹.

- (6) a. *I *went got* the newspaper.
 b. *I *came talked* to the teacher.
 c. I *went and got* the newspaper.
 d. I *came and talked* to the teacher.

Like quasi-serial verbs and their inflection condition, compounds typically exhibit no internal inflection, even in inflecting languages such as Russian or Estonian (Bauer 2009: 346).

Similarly, Greek nominal and verbal compounds strictly require all first members to be bare of inflectional features (Kiparsky, to appear: 4), with no gender, number, person, voice, or aspect marking. There are compounds that show internal inflection—as in English *arms-dealer* and *children's hour*—but while they may resemble inflection, “their status is quite different in the synchronic grammar,” and they are often synchronically meaningless (Lieber and Štekauer 2009: 14).

Another shared trait between compounds and quasi-serial verbs is the Intervention Condition, called the “inseparability criterion” by Lieber and Štekauer (2009: 11). Quasi-serial verbs forbid intervening words between its two verbs, as in (7) below, where the insertion of *away* between *go* and *read* makes the construction ungrammatical².

- (7) *Go away read.

Lieber and Štekauer (2009) point out that while it is possible to modify a whole compound—in (8a)—it is impossible to insert the word within a compound (8b).

¹ Many of the examples in this section are borrowed from Pullum (1990) while others are my own invention.

² The Intervention Condition is not without its complications, as to be discussed in §2.2.

- (8) a. ugly blackbird
b. *black-ugly-bird

Quasi-serial verbs and compounds share the strong inseparability criterion, as shown in (7) and (8) above. In this way, they stand distinct from more syntactic constructions, like the *go and get* construction, which does not have problems with intervention: for example, *go away and read* remains grammatical.

Quasi-serial verbs exhibit the same typical right-headedness as the majority of compounds (Bauer 2009: 348). While there are some compounds with no obvious heads and some that are left-headed, most English compounds have the second element as the determinatum and head (Marchand 1969). The compound *steamboat*, for example, is a hyponym of *boat*, and *steam-* is an optional element that does not change the word-class of the head, *-boat*. Correspondingly, removing *go* from the quasi-serial verb *go fetch* does not change the syntactic distribution of *fetch* (9b).

- (9) a. He will go fetch the book.
b. He will fetch the book.
c. *He will go the book.

Conversely, removing *fetch* from the quasi-serial verb affects the grammaticality of the construction (9c). The example in (9) indicates that quasi-serial verbs, like many compounds, are right-headed³.

Similarly, the first element of an English compound is typically inert (Lieber and Štekauer 2009: 6). For example, compare (10a) and (10b):

- (10) a. *The plane flew the field.
b. The plane overflowed the field.

³ The second verb in the quasi-serial construction also determines its aspectual properties, yet another argument that quasi-serial verbs are right-headed (Stanley Peters 2009, p.c.). Consider, for instance, the examples in (1):

- (1) a. go play in five minutes
b. go clean in five minutes

Where (1a) is taken to mean that the subject will commence recreation once five minutes has elapsed, (1b) instead means that the subject will, during the interval of five minutes, clean. The second verb determines the crucial difference between these two examples.

In (10), adding *over-* to *flew* changes the syntactic distribution of the word; therefore, Lieber and Štekauer, following Marchand (1969: 100), uses this test to argue that the addition of *over-*, *out-*, or *under-* to verbs does not form proper compounds. Applying the same test to quasi-serial verbs in (11),

- (11) a. He will fetch the book.
b. He will go fetch the book.

we see that the first verbal element is syntactically inert and does not affect the distribution of the quasi-serial verb, thus behaving similarly to compounds.

With all of these syntactic and morphological similarities, one critical difference between compounds and quasi-serial verbs is their stress patterns. Quasi-serial verbs generally carry iambic stress—main stress occurs on their second constituent, the head verb. English compounds, on the other hand, generally carry main stress initially, on which is usually the non-head element. The stress patterns of English compounds, however, is not so simple. There are compounds that carry double stress, such as *grass-green* and *man-made*. There are also compounds which do not have initial stress as usual but are instead stressed on the second element in the compound: *winter coat*, *roast beef*, *revolving door*. Though the general stress patterns of quasi-serial verbs and compounds differ, I will argue in §4 that the metrical treatment of these two constructions is the same.

With the large amount of similarity that they share with compounds, quasi-serial verbs pattern like a type of compound. Syntactically, they are right-headed and do not affect the syntactic distribution of the determinatum and head. Morphologically, quasi-serial verbs can take derivational endings like *-er* in *go-getter* and exhibit intervention and strict inflection conditions. Despite the fact that they differ in stress patterns, poets still demonstrate a desire to accentuate the unithood of these complex words through foot alignment, regardless of whether they have to violate metrical correspondence constraints, as will be shown in latter sections. Lastly, given both previous work and the comparisons with syntactically similar constructions discussed in the next section, quasi-serial verbs are clearly morphologically unified entities rather than syntactically conjoined ones. This morphological constituency further supports the claim that quasi-serial verbs are verb-verb compounds.

2. Previous work: What a quasi-serial verb is *not*?

Pullum (1990) termed the *go get* construction “quasi-“ serial because quasi-serial verbs fail to exhibit the same characteristics and behavior as true serial verbs. At the same time, the term *quasi-serial verb* distinguishes the *go get* construction from similar two-verb constructions. In particular, Pullum differentiates between the *go and get* coordinate structure of two conjoined verbs and quasi-serial verbs, which have most commonly been treated as closely related—if not near-identical—constructions. Pullum’s assessment of quasi-serial verbs as distinct from serial verbs and conjoined verbs is an acute one, which the metrical evidence presented in §4 and the historical argument in §5 demonstrate. I hypothesize on the actual lexical status of quasi-serial verbs in later sections. The following sections 2.1. and 2.2 discuss the crucial differences and similarities between quasi-serial, serial, and conjoined verb constructions, as found in the existing literature on quasi-serial verbs.

2.1 Serial verbs versus Quasi-serial verbs

The two verbs of the serial verb construction usually share their verbal arguments and only have one tense or aspect specification. The following examples demonstrate serial verbs from Sranan, an English-based Creole spoken in Surinam, from Baker (1989).

- (12) a. Kofi naki Amba kiri.
 Kofi hit Amba kill
 ‘Kofi struck Amba dead.’
- b. Mi fringi a batra broko.
 I throw the bottle break
 ‘I threw and broke the bottle.’

In the examples in (12), the transitive V_2 of the serial verb construction shares its object with the V_1 . Baker also shows that in the cases of three argument verbs, only one argument occurs after V_2 , rather than the usual two (13):

- (13) a. Kofi hari a ston puru na ini a olo.
 Kofi pull the stone remove Loc in the hole
 'Kofi pulled the stone out of the hole.'
- b. Kownu seni wan boskopu gi Tigri.
 King send a message give Tiger
 'King sent a message to Tiger.'

The V_2 in the examples in (13) should usually have both a following theme and a goal or location arguments; however, because they occur as the second verb in the serial verb construction, only the goal or location argument surfaces after the verb. The theme is shared by both transitive V_1 and transitive V_2 .

English quasi-serial verbs are markedly different from the serial verbs because they do not have the same argument-sharing properties. The first elements of quasi-serial verbs, usually *come* and *go*, are intransitive while the second elements are either intransitive or transitive (14).

- (14) a. I'll *go sleep*.
 b. *Come serve* the meal.

While both verbs share subjects, they cannot share other arguments because V_1 is intransitive and only assigns one thematic role. We would not expect otherwise with the intransitive verbs *go* and *come*. In (15), the ditransitive verbs occur with both their theme and recipient arguments.

- (15) a. I will *go give* the student his homework.
 b. *Come tell* me the news.

The V_2 ditransitives in the quasi-serial verbs in (15) differ from the ditransitives in the serial verbs of Sranan in (13) because both their theme and recipient arguments are realized. Whereas true serial verbs share at least one argument in addition to the subject, quasi-serial verbs do not.

2.2 Conjoined verbs versus Quasi-serial verbs

Because quasi-serial verbs do not pattern like serial verbs of non-English languages, they have more often been classified with other two-verb constructions like conjoined verbs, *go and get*. Many have posited that quasi-serial verbs historically derive from dropping the conjunction coordinated structures, an issue that is discussed at length in §5. Pullum (1990), however, points

out several features discussed in the previous literature on quasi-serial verbs that critically distinguish *go get* from the *go and get* construction including range of inflection, stacking, syntactic extraction, semantics, and intervention conditions.

As already discussed in §1, the elements of a quasi-serial verb must remain in their bare forms, unlike the verbs of a *go and get* construction. Example (16) demonstrates this difference once again:

- (16) a. *I *went got* the newspaper.
b. I *went and got* the newspaper.

In (16), the quasi-serial verb (16a) clearly cannot be inflected whereas the *go and get* construction (16b) accepts inflection to the past tense. Pullum notes, however, that the *go and get* construction is not entirely loose in its inflectional choice, since both verbs of the construction must still agree in the same form. Despite this agreement condition, conjoined verbs are still more liberal in terms of inflection when compared to their quasi-serial counterparts⁴.

In some instances, the *go get* construction can be stacked with more than two verbs whereas the *go and get* construction cannot. Compare the two sentences in (17):

- (17) a. *Come go eat* with us.
b. **Come and go and eat* with us.

Example (17a) demonstrates that the quasi-serial verb construction can occur with more than two verbs. Example (17b), on the other hand, is an unacceptable *go and get* construction, according to Pullum. A stacked *go and get* construction seems somehow more semantically awkward than a stacked *go get* construction. The stacking of verbs is iconic to the events, and the individuality

⁴ Inflection restrictions also distinguishes quasi-serial verbs from other possibly related verb-verb constructions, including the *go to get* construction. A probable story of the historical origins of quasi-serial verbs is that they come from *go to get* constructions, where the *to* drops out, leaving the bare *go get* form. Based on inflection, however, we see that the *go get* and *go and get* constructions are distinct:

- (2) a. *I *went got* the newspaper.
b. He *went to get* the newspaper.

Notice that in (2b), not only can the *go to get* construction occur in an inflected form, but also the two verbs of *go to get* do not have to be in the same form, with *went* in the past tense and *to get* an infinitive. Judging from these differences in inflection restriction, quasi-serial verbs are unrelated to *go to get* constructions.

of the events in (17b), as set apart by the intervening conjunctions, highlights the apparent semantic contradiction between *come* and *go*.

Another *go get* distinction that Pullum points out is the possibility of the extraction of a V_2 complement. Consider the examples in (18), which Pullum gives as evidence for this difference.

- (18) a. What would you like to come go eat?
b. *What would you like to come and go and eat?

While (18b) is ungrammatical and (18a) is not, one should note that (18b) is also an example of a stacked *go and get* construction, which, as demonstrated by example (17) above, cannot be grammatical; thus, Pullum's example used to demonstrate his extraction principle is problematic. Using only two verbs in (19) likely gives us a more untroubled diagnostic.

- (19) a. What would you like to go eat?
b. ?What would you like to go and eat?

Pullum's example in (18b) seeks to show that extraction out of a conjoined construction is ungrammatical, but the example in (19b), which is untainted by stacked verbs, is acceptable for me and others. Pullum's extraction diagnostic to distinguish quasi-serial verbs and conjoined verbs, therefore, does not hold—however, we can note from this that extraction is possible out of a quasi-serial verb, which is also a feature of the serial verb construction (Baker 1989).

Semantic differences between *go get* and *go and get* constructions also arise. Quasi-serial verbs seem to have an obligatory volitional quality whereas conjoined verbs do not, as shown in (20):

- (20) a. *Sometimes driftwood may come wash up on the beach.
b. Sometimes driftwood may come and wash up on the beach.

An accidental and involuntary action is grammatical when stated in the *go and get* construction (20b), but when an accidental and involuntary action is stated in the *go get* form, it becomes ungrammatical, as in (20a). Moreover, the *go get* construction strongly implies a motion away from the viewpoint location while *go and get* does not, exemplified in (21).

- (21) a. *I hope they don't go come back to the house while we're in bed.
 b. I hope they don't go and come back to the house while we're in bed.

In (21a), *come back* indicates a sense of returning to the viewpoint location and makes the quasi-serial verb construction ungrammatical. Example (21b) does not have this problem. These semantic constraints will be important to consider when discussing the historical development of quasi-serial verbs in §5.

The final distinction between quasi-serial and conjoined verb constructions that Pullum notes is the intervention condition between V_1 and V_2 of quasi-serial verbs. The examples in (22) illustrate this point:

- (22) a. *Go away read.
 b. Go away and read something.

For (22b), an intervening word, *away*, does not make the *go and get* construction ungrammatical. In (22a), however, an intervening word between the two verbs makes the *go get* construction ungrammatical. This intervention constraint is fairly strong, although it may be possible that there is an asymmetry between whether the intervening word belongs to V_1 or V_2 (Pullum and Zwicky 1999). Consider the examples in (23)⁵:

- (23) a. *I want you to go upstairs *rewrite* this on a clean sheet of paper.
 b. ?I want you to go neatly *rewrite* this on a clean sheet of paper.
 c. *Why don't you go outside *put* the lizard back on its rock?
 d. ?Why don't you go carefully *put* the lizard back on its rock?
 e. *Go over *glance* at her left ear and tell me what you notice.
 f. ?Go casually *glance* at her left ear and tell me what you notice.

The examples in (23) contrast an intervening word that belongs to V_1 with an intervening word that belongs to V_2 . In (23a), (23c), and (23e), the intervening word belongs to V_1 , making each sentence ungrammatical; in (23b), (23d), and (23f), though, the sentences are more acceptable when the intervening word instead belongs to V_2 .

The intervention constraint on the formation of *go get* constructions, together with many of the other distinctions between quasi-serial and conjoined verb constructions discussed above,

⁵ Examples taken from Pullum and Zwicky (1999).

demonstrate that the two verbs of quasi-serial verbs are more tightly linked than the verbs of a conjoined verb construction. Morphologically, the inflectional forms of V_1 and V_2 must remain in their bare forms, as evidenced in (16). Syntactically, stacking demonstrates that the verbs in quasi-serial verbs are not as independent as those in *go and get* constructions. It is interesting to note that the sentence in (17a) does not suffer from semantic contradiction as (17b) does, which suggests that the verbs of a *go get* construction form units that the verbs of a *go and get* construction do not.

The previous literature on English quasi-serial verbs has generally focused on what a quasi-serial verb is not. As discussed by Baker (1989), quasi-serial verbs lack some of the crucial qualities of proper serial verbs in other languages—most notably, argument sharing. Pullum (1990) outlines the numerous syntactic, morphological, and semantic differences between quasi-serial verbs and other verb-verb constructions such as *go and get*. What a quasi-serial verb actually is, however, still remains unanswered.

There are various proposals for the syntactic representation of quasi-serial verbs in a variety of syntactic frameworks that I do not discuss here. This paper is more concerned with the actual lexical status of quasi-serial verbs. Pullum's arguments already imply that the elements of a quasi-serial verb form a linked constituent, more tightly unified than syntactically coordinated verbs. Section 4 presents metrical data that concurs with Pullum's analysis, providing evidence of a prosodic constituency between verbs in the quasi-serial verb construction. Additionally, a careful study of the treatment of not only quasi-serial verbs but also other similar constructions such as compounds and verb + clausal elements will further demonstrate the constituency of a quasi-serial verb that makes it more a compound than a syntactically conjoined construction. to further pinpoint what a quasi-serial verb is.

3. Prosodic constituency in metrical data

The motivation for exploring metrical poetic texts for evidence regarding the lexical status of quasi-serial verbs lies in the fact that many metrical phenomena in the English iambic tradition are sensitive to prosodic constituency and unit-hood. These phenomena include but are

not limited to resolution and the alignment and bracketing of feet with linguistic constituents. This section reviews some of these phenomena, which demonstrate the long-standing relationship of meter and prosodic sensitivity.

In his 1977 article, Kiparsky discusses a type of resolution involving proclitics—words that do not hold the same status as a full prosodic word. Kiparsky defines this type of resolution as occurring when “[the] vowel of a monosyllabic proclitic (i.e., an unstressed word not belonging to a lexical category) [is] disregarded” (Kiparsky 1977: 237). I have reproduced some of Kiparsky’s examples in (24).

- (24) a. Come to one mark, as many ways meet **in** one town. (Shakespeare, *Henry the 5th*)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
- b. **In** the name of fame and honor, which dies **in** the search (Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) <> (w s) (w s)

The examples above exhibit the proclitic *in*, which is an unstressed function word, sharing a metrical position with another syllable—also known as resolution. Because the proclitics in (24) form a constituent with the noun phrase that follows, it is a candidate for resolution. The resolutions in (24) are highlighted by rectangles. In these cases, proclitics have the potential of being squeezed into a metrical position along with another syllable because of their lexical status and because proclitics belong to the following phrases. This illustrates how some English poets, like Shakespeare are attentive to grammatical difference and constituencies in the language.

Another phenomena we find in the English metrical tradition is the metrical alignment of closely associated words in phrases. Some poets tolerate stress mismatches at the expense of preserving and bracketing a unit, as shown in the examples from Wyatt (cited in Kiparsky 1997; 202):

- (25) a. There is **written** her faier neck rounde abowte (Wyatt, VII)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
- b. So sore **altered** thi sellff how mayst thou se? (Wyatt, LXXV)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

In (25), the words *written* and *alterd* have initial main stress; thus, according to the stress-matching rules laid out in Kiparsky (1977), these syllables should be in a strong position in the metrical template. The templates in (25), however, show that the stress in these words is mismatched—the initial syllables of the words in rectangles show up in weak metrical positions. Wyatt has given up stress matching here in order to preserve the bracketing alignment of word boundary to foot boundary: that is, the metrical unit of the foot matches to the unit of the word despite stress misplacement.

The alignment between foot boundary and boundaries of constituents spread beyond word boundaries. Words of close association are also maintained within foot boundaries, as in (26):

- (26) For how do I **hold thee** but by thy granting (Shakespeare, sonnet 87)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) <

In this example from Shakespeare's sonnets, *hold thee* forms a tight syntactic constituent as verb and object. By placing the verb and its object within a single foot, Shakespeare emphasizes the closeness of these two words—how *thee*, as an object, belongs to *hold*, its argument-assigning verb—and uses the foot as a metrical symbolism, “holding” the two words within a unit.

Along similar lines of alignment practices, poets who are more liberal with stress matching sometimes bracket base forms within affixed forms while violating stress placement, as seen in (27), an example from Wyatt.

- (27) With his **hárdiness** taketh **displéasure**. (Wyatt)
 (w s) (w s) (w s)(w s) (w s)

Both *hardiness* and *displeasure* in (27) have main stresses that occur in weak metrical positions rather than strong ones. Again, as in (25), Wyatt sacrifices stress matching for the bracketing of constituents. In (27), Wyatt highlights the root of the complex word by placing it within one foot—the affixes, *-ness* and *dis-*, are left out of the foot.

The practice of individual poets varies when it comes to the techniques and metrical rules that they follow. Some poets, like Wyatt, allow for stress-mismatch and use the metrical foot as a method to highlight prosodic or syntactic constituency. Other poets, like Shakespeare, are

more conservative, following strict correspondence rules of phrase-level stress as closely as those of lexical stress (Kiparsky 1977: 215). Despite these individual variations, English iambic verse has traditionally been quite sensitive to prosodic and grammatical constituency. By utilizing the metrical constituent of a foot or the metrical device of resolution, poets have the ability to emphasize—whether consciously or not—the unithood of words and phrases. This sensitivity makes the metrical analysis of poetry a prime tool for investigating the lexical status of quasi-serial verbs.

4. Metrical treatment of quasi-serial verbs

This section lays out the results to the metrical analysis of poetic data from the English iambic tradition. Section 4.1 reviews the data used. Section 4.2 demonstrates how English poets all treat quasi-serial verbs in a singular fashion, which testifies to its particular prosodic character. Section 4.3 is a detailed, in-depth study on Shakespeare's practice with quasi-serial verbs and quantitatively compares his treatment of quasi-serial verbs to his treatment of similar—and possibly related—grammatical constructions. The results in this section offers evidence for discovering the historical origins of quasi-serial verbs in §5; additionally, the metrical behavior of quasi-serial verbs will also help to shape a hypothesis for their lexical status, laid out in §5.

4.1 The Data

This study draws on data from seven English poets whose work spans 16th to 20th century British and American poetry:

- (28) a. William Shakespeare (1564-1616)
- b. Isaac Watts (1674-1748)
- c. Lord Byron (1788-1824)
- d. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)
- e. Lewis Carroll (1832-1898)
- f. Robert Frost (1874-1963)
- g. Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

Whilst this list is by no means a comprehensive study of English iambic verse, I have tried to maintain a distributed cross-section from both British and American poetry across four centuries of literature. Additionally, I tried to maintain consistency throughout editions, so that any conclusions about metrical intuitions will either reflect the poet's intuitions or the editor's; the *Riverside Shakespeare* is especially prized for its small number of editors, insuring that metrical intuitions are limited to those of a few people, or Shakespeare.

For several of the poets listed in (28), I searched through their complete works. For others, I only used selected works that were either long enough or otherwise conducive to finding tokens of quasi-serial verbs. All instances of quasi-serial verbs were collected by hand; only in the case of Shakespeare's complete works did I utilize the help of the *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. All in all, I collected roughly 200 tokens of quasi-serial verbs from poets (b) through (g), and 389 tokens from the complete works of Shakespeare, which §4.3 discusses at length. There were also 143 more tokens of quasi-serial verbs in Shakespeare that appeared in prose rather than verse, and these were excluded. In sum, nearly 600 tokens of quasi-serial verbs were metrically analyzed.

4.2 Quasi-serial verbs in English iambic poetry

Overwhelmingly, all of the poets surveyed strictly obeyed correspondence rules of stress-to-strong matching in the meter when using quasi-serial verbs. Since the vast majority of quasi-serial verbs have weak-strong phrasal stress, most of the quasi-serial verbs occur within a metrical foot, with V_1 in the weak metrical position and the first syllable of V_2 in the strong metrical position, illustrated by the examples in (29).

- (29) a. **Go tell** them that I cannot dance to-night. (Longfellow, "The Spanish Student")
 (w s) (w s) (w s)(w s) (w s)
- b. **Go thrust** him out at gates, and let him smell. (Shakespeare, *King Lear*)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
- c. **Come let** us burn at once," they cry. (Watts, Psalm 74)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

In (29), all of the quasi-serial verbs, highlighted in bold, reside within a single metrical foot and correspond in phrasal stress to weak-strong positions, much like the patterns of foot alignment, bracketing, and stress-correspondence discussed in §3. All of the poets studied here follow this pattern for treating quasi-serial verbs.

This phenomena is not a coincidence of quasi-serial verbs occurring in line-initial position, as might be guessed from the examples in (29). The examples in (30) demonstrate the same treatment of quasi-serial verbs line-medially.

- (30) a. Ø Fresh leaved out in rows: “**Come tell** (Plath, “Crystal Gazer”)
 w s w s w s w s
- b. Death laughs—**Go ponder** o’er the skeleton. (Byron, *Don Juan*)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)(w s)
- c. Take thou this note; **go follow** them to prison. (Shakespeare, *King Lear*)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) <>

The weak-strong phrasal stress of the quasi-serial verbs in (30), whether in line-medial (30b, c) or line-final (30a) position, correspond to weak-strong positions metrically; thus, they occur within one foot. Regardless of whether a poet is more liberal with his stress-matching, like Wyatt, or more conservative, like Shakespeare, most quasi-serial verbs will naturally fall within a single metrical foot via stress-to-strong correspondence. This treatment of quasi-serial verbs as a metrical unit corroborates the hypothesis that the two verbs in the *go get* construction act, at some level, as a single constituent. Because poets writing in meter are sensitive to the prosodic constituency of words, all of the poets explored in this study treat the quasi-serial verb as a prosodic unit that, in nearly all cases, is inseparable metrically.

Further evidence supporting this hypothesis comes from the rarity of quasi-serial verbs straddling line breaks in the data. Line breaks are even larger metrical boundaries than foot boundaries; therefore, the intervention of line breaks causes a great interruption in the prosodic unity of quasi-serial verbs. Out of all of the non-Shakespearean tokens of quasi-serial verbs in the dataset, there are only five examples of quasi-serial verbs split by line breaks, two of which are shown in (31).

- (31) a. not of staunching such strict flame, but **come**,

lean to my wound, burn on, burn on. (Plath, “Firesong”)

- b. Awake, O heavenly wind, and **come**,
Blow on this garden of perfume. (Watts, Hymn 74)

The quasi-serial verbs in these line break examples of (31), however, are separated by commas between the two verbs, which may denote that they are not real quasi-serial verb constructions. The prediction is that a true quasi-serial verb could not be found straddling a major boundary such as a line break, and a quasi-serial verb straddling a foot boundary would be only marginally tolerated. A more detailed exploration of quasi-serial verbs and line breaks is in §4.3.

In any case, the orthographic comma automatically represents separability in the constituent of the quasi-serial verb, both to the reader and the poet⁶. *Go get* constructions do not vary categorically in their metrical behavior based on whether or not a comma occurs between the two verbs. At the same time, however, commas indicate the increased potential that a sequence of *go/come* + verb is not as tightly unified of a constituent as most quasi-serial verbs are. Whether this is due to the comma itself acting as an interruption between the two verbs or due to the comma being a realization of the poet’s prosodic perception, I am unable to say.

Despite the fact that quasi-serial verbs not separated orthographically by a comma exhibit the most robust behavior in terms of boundary sensitivity, quasi-serial verbs that are separated by a comma also follow the same pattern, again with only a few exceptions, of foot alignment and phrasal stress correspondence. Consider the examples in (32).

- (32) a. And so, my sober Muse—**come**, **let’s** be steady— (Byron, *Don Juan*)
 (w s) (w s)(w s) (w s) (w s) <>
- b. **Come**, magnify the Lord with me. (Watts, Psalm 34)
 (w s) (ws) (w s) (w s)
- c. **Go**, worship at Immanuel’s feet (Watts, Psalm 146)
 (w s) (w s)(w s) (w s)

Even though commas orthographically separate the two verbs of these quasi-serial constructions, the quasi-serial verbs in (32) still follow stress-matching and are therefore aligned to foot boundaries. This is significant not only because it may be an indicator of the historical development of quasi-serial verbs, as discussed in §5) but also because even some

⁶ And, most probably, the editor.

orthographically separated *go get* constructions maintain the tendency for constituency and unithood that is exhibited by the orthographically-uninterrupted quasi-serial verbs.

4.2.1 Exceptions to quasi-serial verb foot alignment

The first type of exception to the foot alignment of quasi-serial verbs in English iambic poetry is not actually an exception at all. When the main stress of the second verb of a quasi-serial construction occurs on the second syllable, quasi-serial verbs do not occur within a single foot boundary, illustrated in the example in (33).

- (33) Then **come, recéive** my grace. (Watts, Hymn 92)
 (w s) (w s) (w s)

In (33), the second verb of the quasi-serial verb is polysyllabic and carries main stress on its second syllable. Thus, these quasi-serial verbs do not have the typical weak-strong phrasal stress and do not occur in a weak-strong metrical foot. This “exception” is expected given the rigidity of the metrical correspondence constraints, making it not quite an exception at all; in fact, English poets vary on the degree to which they can violate metrical correspondences of stress-to-strong position, and many poets are more conservative than liberal in this respect. We might speculate that if the alignment condition for quasi-serial verbs were stronger, poets would either sacrifice stress-matching or resort to resolution to maintain the alignment of the foot boundary to the quasi-serial verb, as we saw happened in the examples in §3. Neither, however, happens. In all cases where the second verb of a quasi-serial verb is iambic—that is, has its primary stress on the second syllable—poets forego the foot alignment pattern presented in §4.2. This result suggests that though quasi-serial verbs have a status of tight prosodic constituency, the two verbal elements remain, at some level, separate and independent entities.

There are also cases where quasi-serial verbs whose phrasal stress is clearly not weak-strong, as in (34)

- (34) Of twenty-five or thirty—(**Come, make** haste). (Byron, *Don Juan*)
 (w s) (w s) (w s)(w s) (w s)

In (34), *make haste* has weak-strong phrasal stress. Metrical correspondence rules here remain inviolable—given the weak-strong phrasal stress of *make haste*, we would expect that *come, make haste* resides in strong-weak-strong positions. The only reason that these types of quasi-serial verbs do not follow the general pattern of metrical foot alignment is because stress-matching constraints outrank foot alignment in importance.

Lastly, there are cases where metrical correspondence appears to be violated, as in (35):

- (35) What do you want, dear? **Come, stand** by the bed; (Frost, “The Self-Seeker”)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

In these instances, however, we can question whether these verb-verb combinations are actually quasi-serial verbs, as in the examples with line breaks in (31). Two factors seem to limit exceptions that flout stress matching: (1) the presence of *come* as the first verbal element, and (2) the orthographic comma separating the two verbs, which seems to indicate the increased probability that the two verbs do not form a proper quasi-serial verb. These two factors are also critical ones in consideration of the historical evolution of the quasi-serial verb construction.

In total, the exceptions in this section illustrate a delicate and complex nature of quasi-serial verbs. On one hand, the robust pattern of metrical correspondence and its corollary of bracketing and foot alignment to most quasi-serial verbs implies the prosodic constituency of the two verbs in the quasi-serial construction. On the other hand, the exceptions to the pattern suggest that the two verbs retain some independence of their own as words. While the poets are fully aware that quasi-serial verbs consist of two words, they also intuit that the two verbs are closely related and tightly unified, which the metrical handling of quasi-serial verbs reflects.

4.3 Quasi-serial verbs and other verb constructions in Shakespeare

The remainder of this section focuses on an in-depth quantitative study on the metrical behavior of quasi-serial verbs and other verbal constructions in the complete works of Shakespeare. I have chosen to focus on Shakespeare both due to the sheer amount of data available and his well-understood metrical practices. The magnitude of the Shakespeare corpus gives us a sufficient number of tokens of quasi-serial verbs for meaningful quantitative analysis; furthermore, there is also enough data for comparison between quasi-serial verbs and other types

of constructions. Shakespeare's metrical practices—though they vary between plays and poems—also lends a greater richness to the study. Section 4.3.1 walks through the behavior of quasi-serial verbs in Shakespeare. Section 4.3.2 then compares the metrical patterning of quasi-serial verbs with the metrical behavior of both compounds and verb + clausal elements in order to explore and better understand the lexical status of the quasi-serial construction.

4.3.1 Metrical treatment of Shakespeare's quasi-serial verbs

Out of the complete Shakespeare works, there are 389 tokens of quasi-serial verbs used in verse. While there are also instances of quasi-serial verbs in prose, those are of no consequence to the current study and so were put aside. Out of these 389 quasi-serial verbs, 349 are, as a product of strict metrical correspondence rules, foot-aligned, with the first verb and the beginning of the second verb occurring within a single foot. Below, (36) provides a few examples:

- (36) a. **Go hang**, sir, hang! Tell me of that? Away, (Ant, II.vii.53)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
- b. Will you **go see** the order of the course? (JC, I.ii.25)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
- c. Show me, my women, like a queen; **go fetch** (Ant, V.ii.227)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

As discussed in §3.2, quasi-serial verbs occurring line-initially (36a), -internally (36b), and -finally (36c) all fall within the stress matching and foot alignment pattern, demonstrating that this phenomenon is not merely a consequence of line-initial positioning.

Most of the exceptions to the foot alignment of quasi-serial verbs pattern in expected ways, given metrical correspondence constraints—for instance, quasi-serial verbs that have an iambic second verb. In the 389 instances of quasi-serial verbs, six tokens occur with second verbs that are iambic, as in the examples below⁷.

⁷ See Appendix A for the complete list of V₂ iambic quasi-serial verbs in Shakespeare.

- (37) a. “Now the King drinks to Hamlet.” **Come** **begín**; (Ham, V.ii.278)⁸
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
- b. Our bosom interest. **Go** **pronóunce** his present death. (Mac, I.ii.64)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

The examples in (37) show the dearth of foot alignment to quasi-serial verbs when the second verb has main stress on its second syllable. In both of these lines, the quasi-serial verbs straddle a foot boundary, but the stress-to-strong correspondence constraint remains inviolable.

There is a set of constructions that resemble quasi-serial verbs, as in (38), where the first verb is repeated.

- (38) a. **Come, come, let’s** see him out at gates, Ø come. (Cor, III.iii.142)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
- b. **Go, go, dispatch.** | We will, my noble lord. (R3, I.iii.354)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

As in (38), the first verb of the construction is repeated twice and then followed by the second verb. There are twelve instances of this sort in the dataset⁹. It is unclear, however, whether these examples should even be considered quasi-serial verbs. For one, there is phrasal stress between the two repeated verbs where the second is stressed. Second, six of the second unique verbs in these instances are iambic ones, so according to the metrical correspondence constraints, we would not expect them to follow the general foot alignment pattern for quasi-serial verbs anyways. Third, ten of the twelve examples have an orthographic comma separating the first verb from the second unrepeated verb. We have already seen in §4.2.1 that orthographic commas may signal that the construction is not a quasi-serial verb. Thus, there are reasons to question whether these V + V + V₂ constructions, illustrated by (38), are quasi-serial verbs to begin with. In any case, they represent only a small fraction of the overall dataset and, though prosodically interesting, are set aside in the following analysis.

⁸ Another interesting though unrelated metrical moment happens in this line: *King* sits in a weak metrical position, as compared to *Hamlet*, which is in a strong. Though this does not violate any polysyllabic main stress in strong position correspondence rule, it is interesting to note that even in the meter, the King is inferior to Hamlet, reflecting the action in the line itself.

⁹ Included in Appendix B.

Only six quasi-serial verbs in the Shakespeare dataset span line boundaries.. These line-separated quasi-serial verbs are shown in (39)¹⁰.

- (39) a. And send to darkness all that stop me. **Come,**
Let's have one other gaudy night. Call to me (Ant, III.xiii.181-182)
- b. And downright languish'd. Leave me solely; **go,**
See how he fares. Fie, fie, no thought of him. (WT, II.iii.17-18)

Similarly as discussed in §4.2.1, these line-broken quasi-serial verbs almost all have intervening orthographic commas, except for one, in (40):

- (40) With this unprofitable woe! **Come**
Give me your flowers, ere the sea mar it. (Per, IV.i.25-26)

The presence of commas suggests that these examples may not be fully-formed quasi-serial verbs to begin with. Additionally, *come*-headed quasi-serial verbs are less frequent than *go*-headed ones—their distributions will be discussed at length in §5; therefore, it is possible to expect that we would never find *go*-headed quasi-serial verbs without orthographic commas straddling a line break. A completely well-formed, *go*-headed quasi-serial verb should have the greatest prosodic constituency and be most strict in its adherence to metrical correspondence and, typically by extension, foot alignment. Since the distribution of quasi-serial verbs can for the most part be predicted, I also set them aside for now.

Further evidence of the inviolability of metrical correspondence for Shakespeare's quasi-serial verbs comes from examples of near-minimal pairs, shown in (41):

- (41) a. That will be excellent. *I'll* **go buy** them vizards. (MWW, IV.iv.70)
(w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) <>
- b. That silk *I will* **go buy**. And in that time (MWW, IV.iv.73)
(w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

The sole difference between the two lines in (41) is the contraction of *I will* before the quasi-serial verb in (41a), demonstrating that Shakespeare is intent on maintaining phrasal stress matching of the quasi-serial verb *go buy*. Similarly, if an initially-stressed word follows a quasi-

¹⁰ Appendix C shows the complete list.

serial verb made up of two monosyllabic verbs, Shakespeare inserts another monosyllabic word in order to maintain the stress-to-strong correspondence of the quasi-serial construction.

- (42) a. For princes to **come view** *fair Portia*, (MV, II.vii.43)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) <>
- b. “**Go tell** *false Edward*, the supposed king, (3H6, IV.i.93)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

Had the adjectives *fair* and *false* not preceded the following initially-stressed nouns, then there would be an unavoidable stress clash resulting in mismatch of stress to metrical position.

Crucially, such stress clash and mismatch does not ever occur in the Shakespeare dataset.

Finally, there is only one questionable example of mismatch in metrical correspondence in the Shakespeare quasi-serial verbs dataset. The exceptional line is in (43) below:

- (43) Send for the County, **go tell** him of this. (Rom, IV.ii.23)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

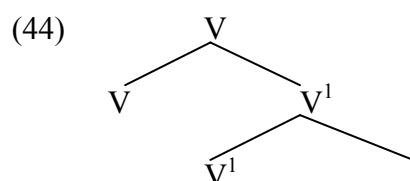
The line in (43) exhibits stress-to-strong mismatch given the typical weak-strong phrasal stress pattern of quasi-serial verbs. Rather than occurring within an iambic foot, *go tell* occurs in strong-weak positions instead—uncharacteristic of what we have seen from Shakespeare’s treatment of quasi-serial verbs. One possible explanation is that *him* is contrastively stressed; if this is the case, then the metrical correspondence rules would not be violated. It is impossible, however, to say for certain. This lone exception demonstrates the robustness of Shakespeare’s strict metrical correspondence for quasi-serial verbs.

Despite the one uncategorizable exception in (43), we find a fairly uniform treatment of quasi-serial verbs: quasi-serial verbs all strictly follow metrical correspondence stress-to-strong constraints, and, as a consequence, quasi-serial verbs mostly fall in line with foot boundaries, where the first verb and the beginning of the second make up an iambic foot. Exceptions to this foot alignment are mostly expected or at least highly predictable, apart from a small portion of the data.

4.3.2 Comparisons of the metrical behavior of different constructions in Shakespeare

The question now is how to interpret the results of the previous section. Given that the overwhelming majority of the quasi-serial verbs in Shakespeare behave expectedly in having strict stress-to-strong correspondence, a basis of comparison becomes necessary. This section analyzes the metrical correspondence and foot alignment of two other constructions: compounds and verb + clausal element constructions. The significance of the results is twofold: the comparison of metrical behavior between quasi-serial verbs and these other constructions will not only give us a metric by which to evaluate the uniformity of the poetic treatment of quasi-serial verbs but also provide valuable information in determining the lexical status of the quasi-serial verb.

Previous syntactic analyses of the internal structure of quasi-serial verbs have proposed that these verbal constructions are formed through adjunction of multiple verb heads. A rough schematic is provided in (44).



Without comment on whether or not the structure in (44) is the correct representation of quasi-serial verbs, I use it as a departure point for the purposes of this paper. Thus, to compare quasi-serial verbs to their closest syntactic relatives, I chose to examine the metrical behavior of verb + clausal element constructions—examples in (45).

- (45)
- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| a. come straight | f. go safely |
| b. come on | g. go in |
| c. come not | h. go not |
| d. come all | i. go we |
| e. come home | j. go home |

These verb + clausal element constructions, demonstrated in (45), include one word adjuncts, adverbials, inverted subjects, and negation following the verb. This class of clausal elements are similar to quasi-serial verbs in syntactic representation, with adjunction to the V. They

furthermore mirror quasi-serial verbs in prosodic phrasing, with phrasal stress on the second element: *go fétch* has comparable phrasal stress to *go ín*.

Using the Shakespeare concordance, I extracted 613 tokens of the verb + clausal element constructions. I then excluded forty-six tokens that could have variable phrasal stress, as in (46),

- (46) a. We **come not** by the way of accusation.
 b. Good night, but **go not** to my uncle's bed—

where *come not* could be acceptably stressed as weak-strong or strong-weak. This left a total of 567 tokens. If quasi-serial verbs are prosodically more tightly linked, then we would expect stricter metrical correspondence and consequently more foot alignment with quasi-serial verbs; otherwise, if we find that strict metrical correspondence and foot alignment is relatively equal or even greater in the cases of the verb + clausal element constructions, then we would know that quasi-serial verbs are not prosodically extraordinary.

Out of the 567 tokens of verb + clausal element constructions extracted for both *go* and *come*, 496 were aligned at the foot boundary (47a) while 71 were not (47b):

- (47) a. To tell it o'er. **Go to**, well said, well said. (Oth, IV.i.114)
 (w s)(w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
 b. To use so rude behavior. **Go to**, kneel. (H8, IV.ii.103)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)(w s)

The strictness of metrical stress correspondence of verbs + clausal elements is significantly different from that of quasi-serial verbs. Excluding the line-broken and repetitious quasi-serial constructions, there are significantly fewer exceptions in the poets' treatment of quasi-serial verbs than in the treatment of verb + clausal element constructions ($\chi^2=47.25$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$). From this result, it is evident that quasi-serial verbs are tighter prosodic constituents than the average verb + adjunct construction. Lexical stress is even more inviolable in English iambic meter than phrasal stress (Kiparsky 1977); therefore, it is important to maintain the stress correspondence of quasi-serial verbs than verb + clausal element constructions because quasi-serial verbs are more like words. Additionally, we can observe here that poets' treatment of quasi-serial verbs is uniformly extraordinary and not just something determined by chance—here

is tangible evidence of the perceptibility of a quasi-serial verb's prosodic constituency and unithood.

On the other end of the spectrum, compounds are truly united words, and the metrical behavior of compounds and quasi-serial verbs is important to consider. A comparable sample of 423 compounds were randomly selected from the Shakespeare concordance. All of the compounds used in this study were spelled as one word (e.g. *huswife*) or were hyphenated (e.g. *brain-sick*). Due to the scarcity of iambically-stressed compounds, the compounds used were all initially-stressed ones, so as to normalize the dataset: *húswife*, *bráin-sick*. Compounds with iambic stress patterns (e.g., *well-fóughten*) were excluded. Given that quasi-serial verbs have a naturally iambic phrasal stress pattern and most compounds have a naturally trochaic pattern, we expect that compounds should ubiquitously not be foot aligned, as shown in (48), so as to not violate polysyllabic stress correspondence constraints.

- (48) A **hare-brain'd** Hotspur, govern'd by a spleen. (1H4, V.ii.19)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

Contrary to expectations, however, the opposite is found: compounds often violate stress-to-strong metrical correspondence in order to align with feet and emphasize constituency. An example is given in (49).

- (49) And afterward consort you till **bed-time**: (ERR, I.ii.28)
 (w s)(w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

Though the stress of *bed-time* falls on the initial syllable, the compound here is mismatched with the stress. The mismatch of stress and metrical position for compounds serves the purpose of drawing attention to the unit of the compound when aligned to the foot. Because the stress pattern of compounds considered here are strong-weak, Shakespeare goes out of his way to violate metrical correspondence constraints so that compounds can occur within a foot boundary. Contrary to this, quasi-serial verbs have weak-strong stress and naturally fall within an iambic foot. We see here that it is important for Shakespeare to highlight the unity of compounds despite stress mismatch. Compounds differ from verb + clausal element constructions because the mismatch of stress in the case of compounds results in foot bracketing whereas the mismatch of stress for verb + clausal element constructions does not. From this comparison behavior, it is

clear that Shakespeare perceives—either consciously or subconsciously—the two verbs of quasi-serial constructions as one closely united entity.

Given the syntactic and morphological similarities of compounds and quasi-serial verbs, their differences in stress and metrical behavior should not raise much concern. Stress itself, as mentioned in §1, is a fairly unreliable diagnostic of compound-hood. *Grass-green* and *man-made*, for instance, have double stress but are undoubtedly compounds (Marchard 1969: 22). The compounds surveyed here do not obey metrical correspondence constraints as strictly as quasi-serial verbs do, but this difference can be attributed to the difference in stress patterns between the trochaic compounds and the iambic quasi-serial verbs. Quasi-serial verbs naturally align with metrical feet due to their generally iambic natures; thus, no manipulation from the poet is necessary to manipulate quasi-serial verbs into alignment with metrical feet. On the other hand, since the trochaic compounds in this study do not naturally fall into the iambic foot, the poet must violate stress-matching if he wishes to emphasize the solidarity of the compound, which explains the difference found between the metrical behavior of quasi-serial verbs and compounds. It will be interesting in future studies to compare the metrical patterning of naturally iambic compounds with quasi-serial verbs—with more comparable stress patterns, we expect not to find a difference in metrical behavior.

5. Historical development of quasi-serial verbs

The debate of the diachronic origins and development of quasi-serial verbs is closely related to discovering the lexical status of these constructions. Without understanding the historical evolution of quasi-serial verbs, it is difficult to conclude anything about what these quasi-serial verbs are.

The usual historical story given for the development of quasi-serial verbs, including the explanation given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is that they derive from a reduction of the *go and get* construction, supposing that somewhere along the line, *and* became an optional element. Zwicky, in his 2003 abstract, gives a different account, based on the fact that the *go get* construction is subject to several more conditions that the *go and get* construction is not, as Pullum (1990) outlines (see §2.1). Zwicky proposes instead that quasi-serial verbs arise from a

reanalysis of imperative constructions, *go* and *come*, followed by imperative phrases, demonstrated in (50).

- (50) a. Go, see how it is!
b. Come, tell me the news!

Through reanalysis, Zwicky hypothesizes, “the resulting construction was then extended from the imperative to other uses of the base form, and then to homophonous finite forms...thus yielding the Inflection Condition.” If quasi-serial verbs had evolved from conjoined verbs, then the Inflection Condition, as discussed in §2.2, would not have arisen since conjoined verbs allow inflection (e.g. (16))¹¹. Moreover, Zwicky cites a preference for face-to-face conversation in these quasi-serial verbs that would follow from this path of historical development. Pullum noted the volitional quality of the *go get* construction (see example (20)), which is a natural and expected consequence of the imperative predecessor of the quasi-serial verb. The observed movement away from the speaker’s viewpoint (see example (21)) in the *go*-headed quasi-serial verbs also represents an imperative quality where someone is sent away for a task.

Though Zwicky does not offer much more extensive evidence in his abstract, his hypothesis on the historical development of quasi-serial verbs can be supported by the data from this study on metrical texts. Included in the foot alignment patterning of quasi-serial verbs in meter were verbs separated by a comma, which is itself an orthographic indicator of the imperative origins of the construction. The comma-separated quasi-serial verbs in this study represent a historical snapshot in the development of the *go get* construction because they seem to be caught between the full imperative form and the full quasi-serial verb form. Many of the exceptions found involve the presence of a comma between the two verbal elements. Line

¹¹ We can safely assume, for the same reason, that quasi-serial verbs are not descendants the *go to get* (*go/come* + *to* + infinitive) construction. We can inflect *go to get* constructions, as in (1) below.

- (1) a. He will go to fetch some water.
b. He went to fetch some water.

Quasi-serial verbs, conversely, allow no inflection whatsoever, even of its first verbal element (2):

- (2) a. He will go fetch some water.
b. *He went fetch some water.

Like the *go and get* story, the Inflection Condition does not fall out naturally from the possible hypothesis that quasi-serial verbs come from *go* + *to*-infinitive constructions.

breaks, for example, rarely separate quasi-serial verbs. The exceptions to this, however, were most commonly ones where a comma interrupts the first and second verbs (see §4.2 and §4.3.1 for examples and discussion). In these instances, it is the imperative form that surfaces because the verbs in the imperatives have not yet been reanalyzed as a prosodic, syntactic, or semantic unit, as Zwicky states.

Another piece of evidence from the metrical data in this study corroborates Zwicky's historical analysis: the majority of quasi-serial verb tokens taken from the corpus are either line-initial, cola-initial, or existed at a major syntactic break. Out of the quasi-serial verbs in Shakespeare that were correctly stress-matched, 257 (~70%) occur at the beginning of the line (51a), at the cola boundary¹², or at a major syntactic break (51b).

- (51) a. **Go muster** men. My counsel is my shield; (R3, IV.iii.56)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
- b. Sirrah, **go see** what trumpet 'tis that sounds. (SHR, In.i.74)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)

In (51), both quasi-serial verbs come at the beginning of major syntactic or metrical breaks. In opposition, there are fewer examples (~30%) in the Shakespearean dataset that occur line- or cola-medially that are not at a major syntactic break. The examples in (52) are some of the few:

- (52) a. I will **go tell** him of fair Hermia's flight; (MND, I.i.246)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s)
- b. Ø Then **come kiss** me sweet and twenty; (TN, II.iii.51)
 (w s) (w s) (w s) (w s) <>

The fact that there are fewer instances like those in (52) than those in (51) is predicted by Zwicky's hypothesis on the development of quasi-serial verbs. He states that these "(sentence-initial) hortatory *go* and *come* with imperatives... were reanalyzed," predicting that the distribution of these quasi-serial verbs in a sentence or higher-level metrical constituent such as a line or colon should be asymmetric. Because the distribution of imperatives is sentence-initial in comparison to the distribution of *go* and *get*, which is sentence-internal, most of the quasi-serial verbs should occur initially because they come from imperatives. The data from the metrical

¹² Cola boundaries fall either between the second and third metrical feet or the third and fourth.

corpus provides much-needed evidence supporting Zwicky's historical analysis over the previously held notion that the *go get* construction derives from the *go and get*. Instead, we see here that it is entirely possible that *go get* comes from *Go, get!* While Zwicky's historical hypothesis on the origins of quasi-serial verbs is merely one alternative explanation to the traditional view of *go get* development, the most important conclusion here is that the quasi-serial construction did not arise from conjoined verbs.

6. Conclusion

Quasi-serial verbs are an old English construction, but it has been hitherto unclear what quasi-serial verbs are. Traditional literature has equated quasi-serial verbs with the *go and get* construction, claiming that quasi-serial verbs result from the dropping of the conjunction. More recent work has focused on distinguishing quasi-serial verbs from both serial verbs and the *go and get* construction but has failed to progress further in lexically categorizing quasi-serial verbs. This paper has utilized metrical analysis of English texts to explore intuitions of quasi-serial verbs, demonstrating crucial quantitative evidence that poets across the English iambic tradition all perceive the quasi-serial verb as a single morphological unit. This finding confirms the hypothesis that quasi-serial verbs do not arise and are entirely distinct from syntactically conjoined verbs. Coupled with syntactic and morphological similarities with compounds, the metrical analysis provided here strongly suggests that quasi-serial verbs are in fact a type of English verb-verb compound.

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Appendix A. V₂ iambic quasi-serial verbs in Shakespeare

- | | | |
|-----|---|------------------|
| (1) | “Now the King drinks to Hamlet.” Come begin; | (Ham, V.ii.278) |
| (2) | Our bosom interest. Go pronounce his present death. | (Mac, I.ii.64) |
| (3) | Well, go, prepare yourself. But hark, what noise? | (MM, IV.ii.69) |
| (4) | Good Catesby, go effect this business soundly. | (R3, III.i.186) |
| (5) | Nay, come, agree whose hand shall go along, | (Tit, III.i.174) |
| (6) | Most learned judge, a sentence! Come prepare! | (MV, IV.i.304) |

Appendix B. Repeated V₁ quasi-serial verbs in Shakespeare

- | | | |
|------|---|--------------------|
| (1) | Whereof the world takes note. Come, come disclose | (AWW, I.iii.189) |
| (2) | Go, go provide. | (AWW, V.i.38) |
| (3) | Come, come, let’s see him out at gates, come. | (Cor, III.iii.142) |
| (4) | I have news to tell you. Come, come, give me your hand. | (H8, V.1.94) |
| (5) | Go, go, dispatch. We will, my noble lord. | (R3, I.iii.354) |
| (6) | Come, come, dispatch, the Duke would be at dinner. | (R3, III.iv.94) |
| (7) | Come, come, dispatch, ‘tis bootless to exclaim. | (R3, III.iv.102) |
| (8) | Come, come, return, return, thou wandering lord! | (1H6, III.iii.76) |
| (9) | Come, come, go in with me. ‘Tis with my mind. | (2H4, II.iii.62) |
| (10) | Go, go, be gone, to save your ship from wrack, | (TGV, I.i.148) |
| (11) | Come, come, be every one officious | (Tit, V.ii.201) |
| (12) | Come, come, beshrew your heart, you’ll ne’er be good. | (Tro, IV.ii.29) |

Appendix C. Quasi-serial verbs with line break intervention in Shakespeare

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|-----|--|-------------------------|
| (1) | And send to darkness all that stop me. Come,
Let’s have one other gaudy night. Call to me | (Ant, III.xiii.181-182) |
| (2) | And downright languish’d. Leave me solely; go, | |

- See** how he fares. Fie, fie, no thought of him. (WT, II.iii.17-18)
- (3) But yond man is very angry. Go,
Let him have a table by himself. (Tim, I.ii.29-30)
- (4) All that you meet are thieves. To Athens go,
Break open shops; nothing can you steal (Tim, IV.iii.446-447)
- (5) And now prepare your throats. Lavinia, come,
Receive the blood, and when that they are dead, (Tit, V.ii.196-197)
- (6) With this unprofitable woe! Come
Give me your flowers, ere the sea mar it. (Per, IV.i.25-26)